

WEED & SEED LAFAYETTE STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, October 23, 2007 -- 5:10-5:50 p.m.
Superior Court 1, Tippecanoe County Courthouse

JoAnn Miller, Program Evaluator for the Downtown Lafayette Weed and Seed initiative, opened the meeting by outlining the purpose of the meeting. Its purpose was to (1) outline the administrative structure, (2) outline the management structure, (3) put together the subcommittees that are needed for operation of the program, and (4) provide updates for the organization. She said the Steering Committee is the official governing body of the Weed & Seed Lafayette Program and that it has a 5-year lifetime.

The Steering Committee has several tasks: (1) to develop a strategy for the program, (2) to reallocate staff and resources as needed, (3) to approve program grants, (4) to advocate for the program and the program's clients, and (5) to create four working subcommittees. These include:

- (1) Weeding
- (2) Community Policing
- (3) Neighborhood Restoration & Vitalization
- (4) Crime & Problem Prevention

Pat Harrington and Don Roush will be in charge of the Weeding side (1 & 2) and John Layton and Rev. Jacob Williams will be in charge of the Seeding side (3 & 4). All committees must have representatives from the three sectors of Steering Committee members: (1) Community leaders, (2) Agency representatives, and (3) Neighborhood residents. Their job will be to discuss and create strategies, collect data, and report findings to the subcommittee chairs, who will in turn report to JoAnn Miller and Judge Johnson (who is Chair of the Steering Committee).

Management of the program will be under the auspices of a Site Coordinator appointed by Mayor Roswarski. The mayor indicated he planned to have this person in place by January 2008.

One aspect of Weed and Seed is a designated "Safe Haven." For the first year, Hanna Center will be the designated Safe Haven. At this location on-going programs will be enhanced by the distribution of information about Weed & Seed; and children and their caretakers will be made aware that this is a safe and welcoming place for them.

JoAnn Miller indicated that it would be the City's responsibility to understand the award documents and prepare a fiscal report for the federal government four times each year.

One of her jobs is to prepare a progress report, summarizing and analyzing performance measures, twice each year.

Miller told the committee that each of them would be requested to sign a “Memorandum of Understanding” that would outline the kind of help that they could provide for the program, such as reallocating resources within their company or agency to directly aid the program. She gave the example of Gary Lehman offering to organize the CEOs of local industry to provide such things as employment for people in the re-entry program. Miller said that any one working with children would be subject to a criminal background check. Memorandum of Agreements will be going out to each committee member in the next 10 days.

Miller next outlined what could be expected in the first year of the program. This includes: (1) about 20 persons entering the program through the re-entry court, (2) training for various parties working with the program, (3) more officers on foot in the Downtown and more patrols in the target neighborhoods, (4) Trinity Methodist Church becoming another “Safe Haven” and operating wellness centers for infants, children, and teens, (5) Miller School recommending at risk students and their families for the Families and Schools Together program; and (6) under Neighborhood Restoration, the mayor’s program of fixing up or demolishing the worst houses will be continued.

Chief Roush spoke and outlined a number of initiatives the police were developing, such as the bike patrol and receiving feedback from the subcommittees on what programs work and what don’t work. An Outreach Commander will oversee the work of the police department with the goal of lowering crime and changing the police culture from one of a response to crime to one of prevention and solving problems ahead of time. The subcommittee working with the chief is expected to meet every other month. He hopes to educate the police department on the concepts of “Weed & Seed,” utilize the concepts of “GRIT” (Gang Resistance in Training), and obtain the free law enforcement training services of the national “Weed & Seed Program.”

Mayor Roswarski thanked all the participants for their willingness to help. He said there has been a great buy-in from the neighborhoods to this program. He also thanked Judge Johnson for his leadership and JoAnn Miller for her assistance.

Pat Harrington said Sheriff Brown and he had attended a 3-day training session for “Project Safe Neighborhood” in Atlanta and had been put in touch with a similar program in Milwaukee. They were planning to utilize this program for help with organization here. He also requested help in finding a Coordinator for the program. The job offers \$25,000, with no benefits. The person selected needs to have knowledge of real estate.

Sheriff Brown briefly spoke about gang related programs that his office is implementing. He is targeting youngsters from 3rd grade through middle school for help with gang related issues.

In closing, JoAnn Miller said that Superior Court I recently received a Department of Justice grant to establish an additional Problem Solving Court. She then asked those in attendance to break up into one of the four subcommittees so that those in charge of each could begin to organize them. The meeting was thus adjourned with the organization of the four subcommittees.

Respectfully submitted.

Thomas G. Van Horn
Acting Secretary
Weed& Seed Lafayette Steering Committee